

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-56 are pending in the present application. Claims 57-77 are cancelled herein. No claims have been added. Claim 1 has been amended to resolve a rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, and claims 3-13, 16, 19-34, 39-43, 45-50, 55, and 56 have been amended to correct minor typographical and grammatical type errors. No new matter has been added.

Claims 1-21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as assertedly being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Applicants' respectfully assert that the amendments submitted herein resolve the 35 U.S.C. § 112 issues presented in the Office Action and, accordingly, respectfully request the rejections of claims 1-21 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, be withdrawn.

Claims 1-56 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as assertedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,323,106 B1 to Huang et al. (hereinafter "Huang") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,228,727 B1 to Lim et al. (hereinafter "Lim"). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

With respect to claims 1-21, Applicants have amended the claims to more clearly recite at least one of the distinguishing features of the present invention. Specifically, Applicants have amended claim 1 to recite the steps "applying a first nitrogen-containing liner on a top surface of the substrate and the trench," "forming a trench-filling material over the first nitrogen-containing liner, the trench-filling material substantially filling the trench," and "removing a first portion of the first nitrogen-containing liner and the trench-filling material such that a second portion of the first nitrogen-containing liner and trench-filling material remains within the trench." None of the cited references, alone or in combination, disclose this combination of steps.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be withdrawn. Claims 2-21 depend from and further limit claim 1 and, therefore, are also deemed to be in condition for allowance.

With respect to claims 22 and 39, both of these independent claims contain limitations that are not addressed by the Office Action and that Applicants could not locate in the cited references. For example, claim 22 recites the steps "providing a substrate having a trench formed therein and a patterned mask thereon, the patterned mask overlies portions of the substrate adjacent to the trench" and "etching a portion of the patterned mask to pull-back the patterned mask from an edge of the trench." Claim 39 recites the steps "filling the trench with a trench-filling material," "planarizing the trench-filling material such that the nitrogen-containing liner remains," and "removing the nitrogen-containing liner overlying the top surface."

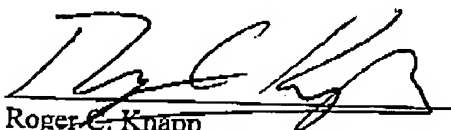
Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claims 22 and 39 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be withdrawn. Claims 23-38 and 40-56 depend from and further limit claims 22 and 39, respectfully, and, therefore, are also deemed to be in condition for allowance.

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that the application is in condition for allowance and request that the Examiner pass the case to issuance. If the Examiner should have any questions, Applicants request that the Examiner contact Applicants' attorney at the address below. No fee is believed due in connection with this filing. However, in the event that there are any fees due, please charge the same, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 50-1065.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date



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